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Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 21 October 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Suazo ..... (Honduras)
later: Mr. Kára (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Czech Republic)
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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 87: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*)

(b) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*) (A/57/189 and A/57/190)

(d) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (*continued*) (A/57/177)

(e) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/57/220)

(f) Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/57/131 and A/57/444)

1. **Mr. O'Brien** (Australia) said that Australia took its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity extremely seriously and supported the full and effective implementation of article 8 (h) thereof. It was pleased with the important work done on the issue of alien species that threatened ecosystems, habitats or species at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. However, at that meeting, Australia had lodged a formal objection to the draft decision on alien invasive species and the associated Guiding Principles, particularly with regard to three references in the text which it believed presented a strong and unacceptable risk of increased trade protectionism. As such, his country did not consider the draft decision to be validly adopted.

2. His delegation, which wanted to cooperate with other Parties and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to resolve the issue, welcomed the recent agreement of the Bureau of the Convention on Biological Diversity to initiate informal consultations on the substantive parts of the Guiding Principles that remained in question as well as the insertion of a footnote to paragraph 19 of the report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity recognizing that some parties had entered reservations about the procedure employed at the Conference of the Parties. However, that footnote should be amended to show that one party, Australia, had lodged a formal objection. All members should note that the status of the decision on alien invasive species remained disputed.

3. Australia sought an agreement which would enable all parties to support the adoption of the decision and the Guiding Principles and looked forward to contributing to the informal consultation agreed to by the Bureau of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

4. **Mr. Gutierrez** (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and of the Dominican Republic, said that Central America was one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. It suffered constantly from volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and landslides and was buffeted on a yearly basis by hurricanes and tropical storms, in addition to being subjected to the intermittent effects of the El Niño phenomenon, including droughts. Deforestation resulting from the use of the land for commercial and subsistence farming and urban growth without proper environmental management further exacerbated the problem. Owing to the narrowness of the Central American isthmus, the impact of those phenomena threatened the very survival of the economies and populations of the region.

5. The States members of SICA endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/57/190). They were satisfied with the coordination between various agencies and organs of the United Nations system and also with organs and bodies such as the Central American Bank for Economic Integration and the Centre for Disaster Prevention in Central America. Such cooperation had enabled the subregion to carry out many activities ranging from workshops on disaster reduction to the establishment of a network for the exchange of information on disaster reduction. Equally important were the efforts being made to promote the participation of national bodies and to build national capacity for risk reduction.

6. However, the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction had not received sufficient resources to allow the secretariat for the Strategy to cover its core requirements or to carry out all the initiatives in its work plan. He therefore urged all Member States to support the implementation of the Strategy.

7. **Mr. Reddy** (India), noting that the 60 elements of guidelines in 25 major areas provided by the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) should provide a comprehensive basis for funding biodiversity activities, said that India supported such funding in accordance with national priorities and action plans. India also welcomed the decision of the Johannesburg Summit to negotiate, within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention should take the necessary steps for prompt implementation of that decision. That regime should include mandatory disclosure of the country of origin of genetic resources in applications for intellectual property rights. India also supported the protection of traditional knowledge to ensure the equitable sharing of benefits arising from its commercial use. In addition, a liability and redress system for damage to biodiversity would contribute greatly to the conservation objectives.

8. His delegation welcomed Malaysia's offer to host the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties and hoped that the international community would take steps to implement the goals of the Johannesburg Summit with respect to the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

9. India welcomed the decision of the second GEF Assembly to make land degradation, desertification and deforestation the new focal areas of the Facility. The confirmation of GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention to Combat Desertification was a significant first step in the process of implementation of commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Lastly, he expressed support for the convening of an international meeting in 2004 to review the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

10. **Ms. Lewis** (International Labour Organization) said that her organization's overriding goal of promoting the access of all women and men to decent and productive work was threatened by natural disasters. Productive jobs constituted a powerful route to recovery for people reeling from the impact of national disasters, but employment creation was not sufficiently emphasized or mainstreamed into national policies and measures adopted after natural disasters. Nor did international and local media cover job losses from such disasters, thus limiting the attention paid to the issue by donors as well as national policy makers.

11. The promotion of work must be an essential element of the relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development process. A first step was to decentralize management of the reconstruction process and create local labour-intensive infrastructure rebuilding programmes that created jobs for the affected population. Citing the example of the ILO InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction (IFP/CRISIS), she said that employment training could also be crucial to post-disaster plans, as job diversification could mitigate the impact of future disasters. ILO fully supported the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the potential for collaboration offered by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction and recognized the valuable role that the Task Force played in facilitating post-disaster partnership and coordination between agencies.

12. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) urged the international community to give higher priority to efforts to combat desertification by effectively supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. International support should focus on capacity-building and on the provision of financial assistance to the countries affected, especially African countries. In that regard, he welcomed the financial assistance provided by the Global Environment Facility for activities to combat desertification. A resolute commitment must be made to combat desertification, which affected one third of the Earth's surface and nearly 900 million inhabitants, in order to prevent famine, guarantee food security and eradicate poverty by helping the affected countries towards sustainable development. If nothing was done to combat desertification, the decline in yields in arid zones would force millions of people to leave their homes in search of a better environment.

13. In 2000, his Government had adopted a national plan of action to combat desertification which called for the sustainable and integrated management of resources to promote food security; improvement of the economic environment in order to eliminate poverty;

improved institutions and legislation to combat desertification; and enhanced knowledge of desertification through the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of drought. Burkina Faso actively participated in regional research programmes conducted by the Sahel Institute and the Centre Régional Agro-Hydro-Météorologique to generate better understanding of the phenomena of drought and desertification. Burkina Faso was also supporting several initiatives to combat desertification developed by other regional institutions such as the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drug Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

14. **Mr. Bossina** (Congo) said that, without strict environmental policies, there could be no sustainable development. Deforestation was seriously affecting his country and other Congo Basin countries. The Congo forest was the second largest stretch of unbroken forest in the world after the Amazon and constituted a major reservoir of biological diversity. The Congo Basin's flora and fauna were threatened by uncontrolled development and required national and subregional conservation measures. Accordingly, his Government had drawn up a new forest policy based, among other things, on enhancing knowledge in order to promote better conservation of forest ecosystems, updating the legislative and regulatory framework through the enactment in 2000 of the forest code, and revision of laws regarding the protection of fauna.

15. At the subregional level, the Conference of Ministers in Charge of Forests in Central Africa had established a Convergence Plan, which was a framework of priority actions for the period 2002-2005. Such actions included the creation of new protected areas, the intensification of reforestation programmes and the development of alternative activities around the protected areas for the local populations. Those initiatives were supported by a multilateral partnership involving Governments, para-State organizations, the private sector, civil society, the resident populations and donors. In that regard, he expressed gratitude to the G8 countries for their support for efforts with respect to the conservation of the fauna, forests and biodiversity of the Congo Basin.

16. His delegation was pleased to note that, under the leadership of the Governments of the United States and South Africa, the partnership initiative on the Congo Basin had made considerable progress. Indeed, since the Johannesburg Summit, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership had been signed in early September 2002 in Libreville between the United States Government and the five member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States. On behalf of the Congo Basin countries, he thanked the Governments of South Africa and the United States for their support of conservation efforts in Central Africa, expressing the hope that that new feeling of solidarity would prompt further assistance from the wider international community for conservation efforts in Africa.

17. **Mr. Leslie** (Belize), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that at the World Summit in Johannesburg leaders of the Alliance had issued a communiqué pointing out that efforts of the small island developing States to achieve sustainable development would be thwarted by the catastrophic effects of climate change.

18. Desertification, drought and land degradation seriously compromised poverty reduction efforts. At the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled to meet in New Delhi, representatives of the small island States intended to convey their deep concern and their interest in ensuring the full implementation of the Marrakesh Accords without new loopholes. Practical assistance would also be sought to continue the activities undertaken at the national level. They were particularly concerned that valuable experience gained might be circumvented by unscrupulous outside forces.

19. The Convention on Biological Diversity continued to be a valuable tool in terms of understanding the broadest value of the conservation, management and sustainable use of natural resources and in terms of protecting intellectual property rights.

20. With regard to the international meeting to review the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 2004, the members of the Alliance wished to reaffirm the validity of the Programme of Action, especially the concept of sustainable development as a responsibility to be met in partnership with the entire international community. It was hoped that the meeting would be a forum for frank and deliberate discussion on achievements and failures, rather than for the negotiation of a new text or programme. The Alliance called on the Secretary-General to propose specific modalities to ensure that the process leading up to the

international meeting was action-oriented and comprehensive, providing coordination of input from expert meetings and from other relevant processes. It also called on the General Assembly to make adequate financial provisions for the process as a whole.

21. *Mr. Kára (Czech Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

22. **Mr. Djumala** (Indonesia) said that his delegation greatly appreciated the work and activities of the agencies and organizations of the United Nations system coordinated by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, and that Indonesia supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General, in document A/57/190. Effective regional, subregional and national strategies required financial and technological support in addition to capacity-building. In that regard, the Task Force and the secretariat for the Strategy played crucial roles in the implementation of the Strategy. Indonesia therefore urged donor countries and organizations to provide financial support to the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction.

23. He agreed that the lack of adequate and predictable financial resources had posed a major constraint on the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. Indonesia welcomed the designation of land degradation as an additional focal area of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), providing new opportunities for the financing of projects under the Convention. The convening of the first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention reflected the serious commitment of the Parties. Indonesia welcomed activities undertaken to build synergies with the secretariats of the Conventions on desertification, biological diversity and climate change, in order to enhance coordination between the three instruments and to explore options for further cooperation.

24. Indonesia, comprising over 17,000 islands, shared many of the development challenges and constraints of small island developing States, and supported ongoing activities and measures for the implementation of sustainable development of small island developing States. There was also a need to prepare for the full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in 2004.

25. In conclusion, he said that the provision of predictable and stable financial resources and other innovative ways of financing, as agreed in the various United Nations conferences and summits, should be ensured.

26. **Mr. Sosa** (Dominican Republic) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/190), which provided current and valuable information on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The limited resources of the Dominican Republic were increasingly used to offset the impact of hurricanes which had taken a toll on the island's population and economic infrastructure. Therefore, his delegation fully supported the resolutions on the Strategy and on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon.

27. The Government of the Dominican Republic had enacted a law concerning natural disasters, to strengthen coordination between the bodies rendering emergency assistance in case of natural disasters, and to formulate early warning plans to prevent and mitigate the effects of potential hazards.

28. It was, however, crucial for developed countries with advanced scientific technology and vast resources for information and communication technology to invest in the building and improvement of national capacities, and to provide technical and financial assistance to minimize risks to human life and infrastructure which impeded the sustainable development of developing countries.

29. The Dominican Republic also appealed to donors and financial institutions of the United Nations system to continue strengthening the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction and the secretariat for the Strategy, which relied solely on voluntary contributions.

30. **Ms. Escorel** (Brazil) said that the preparatory process for the World Summit had provided an opportunity to review progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, identify obstacles and decide on a series of actions to further promote the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes. The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation reaffirmed the principles established at the Rio Conference and adopted an integrated approach to the three pillars of sustainable development.

31. Major decisions related to the agenda items under discussion had also been taken at the World Summit. The need to further address the issue of natural

disasters and vulnerability, the need to promote an inclusive approach to those issues as well as risk assessment and disaster management had also been recognized. Brazil welcomed the agreed measures in terms of strengthening the role of the Strategy, support for the establishment of effective strategies and support for disaster management, boosting early warning systems, information networks and institutional capacities, and special emphasis on cooperation in prevention and mitigation activities in order to assist affected countries in coping with environmental disasters.

32. Moreover, Brazil fully endorsed the decision to include land degradation as an additional focal area of GEF making the Facility a financial mechanism of the Convention to Combat Desertification. The north-eastern region of Brazil was the most populous semi-arid area in the world and annually suffered enormous economic losses due to desertification. Her delegation therefore welcomed recent decisions taken in that regard and looked forward to their implementation.

33. Brazil also welcomed the decisions taken to address the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and commitments made regarding the sustainable development of small island developing States. It was ready to share its best practices and engage in South-South cooperation in support of measures and actions outlined in the Plan of Implementation

34. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa) said that the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development had advanced the debate on many issues of concern, underscoring the importance of concerted action by the international community, the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and the need to protect traditional knowledge.

35. The alarming rate of loss of biological diversity, partly attributable to climate change, land conversion, unsustainable harvesting of natural resources and introduction of alien species, posed a major challenge because of the role of diversity in sustaining humanity. Agricultural and food safety, as well as a large portion of the global economy, were dependent on biological processes and products.

36. South Africa attached great importance to the conservation and sustainable use of its resources and had adopted a national plan for the management of biodiversity, which emphasized the need for benefit-sharing. The protection of traditional knowledge and the rights of local communities was an ethical imperative that should be supported by all countries. Capacity-building was crucial in enabling developing countries to implement the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

37. The economies of the southern African region had suffered from the effects of drought and it was anticipated that climate change would result in reductions in crop yields, water scarcity and the emergence of disease. Developing countries on the whole were most vulnerable to the problems caused by climate change and desertification. South Africa was encouraged by reports that the Kyoto Protocol would shortly enter into force, and urged other countries to ratify the Protocol. With respect to desertification, he said that the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification had been hampered by inadequate funding. South Africa welcomed the decision on the inclusion of land degradation in the GEF and urged the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to endorse that decision.

38. South Africa further supported the Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which urged the international community to assist developing countries to adapt to environmental changes and develop national action plans. The Plan of Implementation also stressed the need for the secretariats to the Conventions on climate change, biological diversity and desertification to build synergies and complementarities. Likewise, the international community had further been urged by the participants in the World Summit to expedite the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

39. **Mr. Yahya** (Israel) said that Israeli scientists had always shared their expertise in combating desertification with other countries, most recently through the International Programme for Arid Land Crops (IPALAC), launched in 1995 with UNESCO funding under the auspices of Ben-Gurion University, which had been involved in desert agriculture since the mid-1950s. The purpose of the Programme was to help create "cyber-communities" of like-minded agricultural researchers from around the world and to act as a catalyst for biodiversity utilization by forming coalitions of national and international research

institutions, NGOs and other parties to develop, evaluate and implement plant-based environmental and developmental projects. Through the use of electronic communication, IPALAC had succeeded in bringing together researchers who were previously unaware of each other's existence. For the present, IPALAC's focus was on Africa.

40. The know-how and technologies for substantially increasing the income and productivity of farmers existed already, but the challenge was to put the tools — both for irrigated and for rain-fed agriculture — into the hands of those who could benefit from them in the shortest possible time. The development of irrigation was probably the most effective means of intensification of agriculture, but in Africa a number of factors worked against conventional large-scale irrigated agriculture: individual cultivated plots were usually small; developing and maintaining water supply systems was relatively expensive; the costs of agricultural input were higher and the yields lower than in other places; and farmers were not used to large-scale irrigation technologies and practices. Many of those problems were solved by gravity-fed drip irrigation which brought almost all the benefits of high-technology systems but at a fraction of the cost. It provided every plot in a field with the exact amount of water it required, resulting in a higher yield of better-quality products while substantially reducing labour requirements. Regional cooperation was basic to combating desertification, and it was imperative that the international community be sufficiently flexible and inclusive to allow every country to define its own needs and find its own solutions within a regional framework.

41. **Mr. Kyi Tun** (Myanmar) welcomed the progress made by the United Nations system to coordinate disaster reduction activities among its agencies in order to implement the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, as well as the efforts of regional agencies to supplement that strategy with the active participation of national constituencies. Myanmar particularly commended ESCAP's implementation in 2001 of a regional project to strengthen capacity in the planning and management of flood mitigation and preparedness in large river basins in Asia and the Pacific, and hoped that the project would be extended to all other major river systems in the region. Myanmar had been encouraged by the fact that 57 countries had drawn up national plans of action to combat desertification, and considered that they deserved the support of United Nations agencies and the international community for their effective implementation. The fact that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) had recently decided to make land degradation, and especially desertification and deforestation, a new focal area of its activities was also an encouraging development. Land degradation was one of Myanmar's greatest concerns, and it had implemented an integrated plan for the greening of the country's central dry zone over the next 30 years involving the protection of remaining natural forests and the reforestation of denuded forest areas; the project had largely been implemented by national resources, but there had been contributions from UNDP, as well as organizations in Japan and the Republic of Korea and a private company in New Zealand. Finally, Myanmar had been encouraged by the outcome of the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which had marked a significant shift of focus from policy development to a more balanced implementation of Convention objectives.

42. *Mr. Suazo (Honduras) resumed the Chair.*

43. **Miss Clarke** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that were Members of the United Nations, said that current efforts to build regional strategies for disaster reduction aimed at fostering the involvement of national constituencies in implementation of the International Strategy should take full account of the special circumstances of the small island developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean region. It would be necessary for risk and vulnerability reduction concerns to be mainstreamed into other relevant programme areas. CARICOM member States wish to renew the call, made on several previous occasions in the Committee, for financial resources to be made available in a timely manner to countries affected by natural disasters; they were particularly concerned that the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction had not received the resources it needed for its core requirements to be covered or all the initiatives in its work plan to be carried out, and they supported the call for established posts so that the secretariat could be in a position to fulfil its mandate. CARICOM member States welcomed GEF's support through the Wider Caribbean Initiative on Ship-Generated Waste, and looked forward to progress reports on the results of

cooperation between the Convention on Biological Diversity and United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental organizations, which would greatly facilitate the formulation of national policies in the region on a number of cross-cutting issues related to biological diversity, conservation and development. In the area of tourism, CARICOM welcomed the decision to review work on sustainable tourism and looked forward to the completion of draft guidelines on the basis of consultations. Caribbean and Pacific SIDS looked forward to a frank and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in Mauritius in 2004. The Caribbean Sea could no longer sustain the demands placed upon it without a holistic and integrated management approach; its special characteristics merited an innovative approach embracing the concerns of all States bordering it as well as of the international community.

44. **Mr. Nanjira** (World Meteorological Organization) said that the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) was actively involved in efforts to mitigate and, wherever possible, to prevent the effects of natural hazards; to rationally develop and use energy resources, including renewable energy sources; and to undertake studies and issue regular updates on the El Niño phenomenon. It had been instrumental in establishing an international centre for the study of the El Niño phenomenon and would be cooperating closely with the Government of Ecuador in that field. It supported the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and would continue to play an active role in the Inter-Agency Task Force on climate and disasters, which it chaired, and in the other subsidiary bodies and working groups of ISDR.

45. The World Meteorological Organization had established regional and subregional mechanisms in Latin America, in Asia and in Africa, where drought monitoring centres provided important advisories for monitoring, prediction and early warnings on several climate and weather-related extreme events. It had been actively involved in measures to improve the development situation of small island developing States. In the areas of climate change, drought and desertification and biodiversity, WMO participated actively in the Conferences of Parties to the relevant conventions and collaborated closely with the Convention secretariats.

46. Given the cross-cutting nature of biodiversity, WMO welcomed the establishment of advisory bodies and mechanisms such as the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing and noted the call in the Hague Ministerial Declaration for a coherent implementation of the objectives of the Convention to assure the attainment by 2010 of a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss. It would be useful if consideration could be given to a system-wide initiative on conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

47. The Organization had participated actively in the World Summit on Sustainable Development, since the challenges facing the world community in the field of sustainable development were too grave to be treated lightly. Consideration should be given to how to follow up the Summit, how to improve the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and make it really global, how to bring the Kyoto Protocol into effect, and how to fully realize the goals and objectives of Agenda 21 and the other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the Summit.

48. **Mr. Davison** (United States of America) said that the international calendar was overcrowded with meetings and conferences on environment and sustainable development, and that hindered the effectiveness of international policymaking efforts. Several recommendations had been made to ease the burden, and they must be borne in mind.

49. A serious procedural issue had arisen during the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity regarding the meaning of consensus. His delegation was pleased that the United Nations Legal Counsel had confirmed the United States Government's understanding that "consensus" meant the absence of formal stated objection to the adoption of a decision. At the sixth meeting, Australia had lodged formal objections to a decision, but the Chairman had allowed the decision to be adopted. His delegation remained of the view that a formal objection to the adoption of a decision was sufficient to block it. There was no basis in law or practice to impose a requirement that a State should have to repeatedly object in the same terms. Consequently, the United States continued to view the decision in question as not legally adopted by consensus, as a result of which the decision could not stand.

50. It was his Government's view that conference servicing expenses for treaty bodies such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), should be met by the respective parties to those treaties. It was important to end the existing administrative arrangement whereby the approximately $3 million in annual conference servicing expenses for UNFCCC were paid out of the regular United Nations budget. The United States would seek to amend the language in General Assembly resolution 56/199, which had authorized regular budget funding for UNFCCC for the next five years. The amendment would require reimbursement for all United Nations administrative and conference services starting from the current year.

51. **Mr. Ayari** (Tunisia) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

52. Desertification was currently one of the most serious threats to the environment of many countries, especially since it hindered economic and social development and created instability. Tunisia, which had suffered through repeated droughts, was making a tremendous effort to combat the phenomenon of desertification. In 1998, his country had launched a national programme to combat desertification; however, climate remained one of the main obstacles hindering implementation of the programme. The Johannesburg Summit had paid special attention to the phenomenon of desertification, which affected many countries, especially developing ones. Tunisia was pleased to note the decision of the Summit on the implementation and financing of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. His delegation was also pleased that the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) had decided to recommend making land degradation (desertification and deforestation) a new focal area of the Facility, and that the Conference of the Parties to the Convention had decided to establish the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention. He noted with satisfaction that the secretariats of the Conventions on climate change, biological diversity and desertification had established a Joint Liaison Group to enhance coordination and promote synergies between the three instruments.

53. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Summit had stressed the importance of biodiversity to sustainable development and poverty eradication and the need to ensure the attainment by 2010 of a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss. However, that objective could not be implemented without financial resources.

54. His delegation shared the concerns of the small island developing States (SIDS) that the Millennium Declaration should be implemented as well as the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Although those States must take responsibility for their development, they were especially vulnerable to climate change and natural disaster and would not be able to achieve their objectives unless they received increased development assistance.

55. **Mr. Zenna** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77.

56. His delegation attached special importance to actions to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought and floods. As underscored at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Convention to Combat Desertification was a distinctive tool that could be used for poverty eradication in the poorest rural areas of developing countries. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Global Environment Facility would be used as a financial mechanism for implementation of the Convention.

57. For Ethiopia, which was regularly hit by a drought, the scrupulous implementation of the Convention was a matter of survival. There was a need for a stronger partnership with the international community to implement his Government's food security programme. Ethiopia had signed the Convention to Combat Desertification on 15 October 1994 and had ratified it on 27 June 1997. National and state action programmes to combat desertification were designed to complement the Government's conservation strategy, the food security programme and the industrialization strategy geared to agricultural development. A national desertification fund had also been established. The Environment Protection Authority and the Science and Technology Commission were the national focal points for the implementation of the Convention. Nevertheless, the budgetary resources allocated by the Government were far from sufficient to implement the programme of action, and efforts to mobilize funds from international partners with the help of the United Nations Development

Programme had not yielded significant results. His delegation hoped that the new financial mechanism for the Convention, the Global Environment Facility, would alleviate the shortage of financial resources for implementation of the Convention.

58. **Mr. Smaili** (Algeria) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77.

59. Algeria attached great importance to the Convention to Combat Desertification, given the serious damage caused by the phenomenon of desertification and drought. The relationship between poverty and the environment and the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification had been stressed in the April 2001 report of the Panel of Eminent Personalities set up in April 2001 by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. That correlation had been further reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The New Partnership for Africa's Development was also addressing the problem of desertification on the African continent.

60. Unfortunately, despite the wide recognition of the importance of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the international community had not shown the same commitment to its implementation that had been accorded to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Climate Change and the lack of financial resources had seriously hampered efforts to implement the Convention. It was therefore encouraging to note that the World Summit on Sustainable Development had paved the way for the Global Environment Facility to become the financing mechanism for the Convention. His delegation supported the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Council and Assembly of the Global Environment Facility as well as the Conference of the Parties to the Convention should be invited to operationalize the conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

61. His delegation welcomed the decision taken by the second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility, held recently in Beijing, making land degradation (desertification and deforestation) a new focal area of the Facility as well as the invitation to the next meeting of the Conference of Parties to decide to make GEF a financing mechanism for the Convention. Coordination between the conventions on desertification, biological diversity and climate change should be enhanced and their synergies should be maximized.

62. **Mr. Moeini Meybodi** (Iran) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

63. The Second Committee should adopt a procedural resolution endorsing the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and stressing the importance of the programme of work to be adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its next session. The resolution should request the Secretary-General, in the context of the reform of the United Nations, to take into full account chapter 10 of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which dealt with the institutional framework for sustainable development.

64. The Secretary-General's recommendations on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction were generally acceptable, including those on the institutional aspects of United Nations activities relating to the Strategy. It was important to include international agreements and outcomes in the Strategy and in the review process referred to in paragraph 61 of the report (A/57/190). Care should be taken not to go beyond the Summit outcomes on some issues on which no clear scientific conclusions had been reached, such as the proposal to link climate change and natural disaster. In the view of his delegation, that work should be left to the competent body. In regard to the Convention to Combat Desertification, the recognition of GEF as the financial mechanism of the Convention was a major achievement. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention should adopt an appropriate decision to complete the process and pave the way for smooth implementation of the Convention. With regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity, he pointed out that there were conclusions in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, including in paragraph 42, which needed to be addressed. Lastly, he said that his delegation supported the idea of an international meeting in 2004 to review the Barbados Plan of Action.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.